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## THE DIVINE MOTHERHOOD—RECENT STUDIES

### Keynote Address

Mariological Society of America Meeting  
Adrian, Michigan  
May 2006

*Christopher O'Donnell, O.Carm., S.T.D.\**

There are many ways of dealing with the theme of the Theotokos in contemporary theology. We have the valuable annual surveys by Eamon R. Carroll in *Marian Studies*. Little misses him and, moreover, he guides the reader with incisive but always urbane observations. Then there are attempts at synthesis, two outstanding ones being associated with the Italian Stefano De Fiores.<sup>1</sup> Another is by René Laurentin, *Marie clé du mystère chrétien*,<sup>2</sup> which focuses on four key stages of salvation—Incarnation, Redemption, Pentecost, Assumption, so that Mary can be seen as a paradigm of faith, holiness, virginal maternity, prophecy, divine and human communication, the Gospel hundredfold, queenship, an icon of the Holy Spirit and eschatological icon. Another way is through the important

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<sup>1</sup> Stefano De Fiores, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Centro "Mater Ecclesiae," 1987); *Nuovo dizionario di mariologia*, ed. S. De Fiores and Salvatore Meo (Milan: Ed. Paoline, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> René Laurentin, *Marie clé du mystère chrétien* (Paris: Fayard 1994; Ital. ed.—Milan: San Paolo, 1996).



encyclopedias of recent decades,<sup>3</sup> compendia,<sup>4</sup> *Festschriften* for Marian scholars<sup>5</sup> and congresses, valuably noted by Fr. Eamon. New books are appearing constantly—some general Mariologies,<sup>6</sup> some particularly valuable ones by theologians whose primary area of specialization has not been Mariology and thus come from a wider perspective and context.<sup>7</sup>

Some years ago, at a Carmelite Mariological seminar at Sassone near Rome, I was asked to give an outline of contemporary Mariology. I attempted to present various models of Mary. The idea of models came from someone who is a “model” theologian, Avery Cardinal Dulles, in his work *Models of the Church*.<sup>8</sup> Though he himself would later come to realize the limitation of models, he still employed them in later works on revelation and on faith. And others have followed.<sup>9</sup> I found it helpful for that occasion, and I revised it for a conference of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Bath (England) three years later. I also used this approach for a conference in

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Michael O’Carroll, *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 2nd ed. (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1983); Remigius Bäumer and Leo Scheffczyk, eds., *Marienlexikon*, 6 vols. (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1988-1994).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Wolfgang Beinert and Heinrich Petri, eds., *Handbuch der Marienkunde* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> E.g., *Mater fidei et fidelium* (Fest. Théodore A. Koehler), *Marian Library Studies* 17-23 (1985-1991); *Kecharitômenê: Mélanges René Laurentin*. (Paris: Desclée, 1990); *Mother Behold Your Son: Essays in Honor of Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm.*, ed. D. W. Buggert, L. P. Rogge & M. J. Wastig (Washington, DC: Carmelite Institute, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Paul Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2004); Kathleen Coyle, *Mary in the Christian Tradition: From a Contemporary Perspective*, rev. ed. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications; Leominster: Gracewing, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> E.g., George H. Tavad, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1974; 2nd ed., 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983) and *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York/Oxford: Oxford: University Press, 1994), 170-184. See further, Sallie MacFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age*, trans. Martin Heymans (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); John E. O’Grady, *Models of Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1982); Bernard Sesboué, *Jésus-Christ l’unique médiateur* (Paris: Desclée, 1988).

Italy that has already been published<sup>10</sup>; the ESBVM presentation is forthcoming. The models that I offered were:

- Mary seen as Mother of God and of the Lord;
- Icon of the Church;
- Temple-Spouse of the Spirit;
- The All-Holy One;
- Servant and Disciple;
- Mother of the Redeemed;
- The Woman: Miriam of Nazareth.

Following the example of Cardinal Dulles, in each case I described the model and gave scriptural, dogmatic, ecumenical, and pastoral considerations associated with it. For this meeting, I decided to look at studies on the Mother of God and to offer some reflections.

### **The Post-Vatican II Scene**

Many writers have outlined the development of Mariology since Vatican II. In the context of spirituality, Tina Beattie has recently indicated eleven marks since the Council:

- Waning (1968-1974);
- *Marialis cultus* (1974);
- *Redemptoris Mater* (1987);
- Ecumenism: emphasis on salvation history;
- Shrines and apparitions: Rwanda (1981), Medjugorje (1981);
- Petrine and Marian dimensions of the Church;
- Liberation theologies: Mary as a model of spirituality that expresses itself in solidarity with the oppressed in their search for justice;

<sup>10</sup> Christopher O'Donnell, "Mary in Contemporary Theology," in *In Communion with Mary: Our Heritage and Prospects for the Future*. ed. E. Coccia, Carmelite Mariological Seminar, Sassone, Italy, June 2001 (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2003), 53-74.

- Feminist reinterpretations of Mary;
- New holistic spiritualities: Mary affirms the significance of the body in the spiritual quest;
- Cosmic redemption in Christ—Mary in redeemed creation;
- Mary’s “yes” affirms the authority, dignity, and holiness of woman before God in the Christian story.<sup>11</sup>

Others could be added:

- The possibility and/or desirability of a new definition(s) of Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Universal Advocate;
- Writing on the Immaculata inspired partly by St. Maximilian Kolbe;
- Scriptural studies on Mary beyond the historical critical method, especially symbolic readings;
- Eastern “Theotokology,” since “far from being a tract on Mary, it is a chapter of Christology, nourished by the liturgy and having ramifications in ecclesiology and eschatology;”<sup>12</sup> furthermore, Eastern liturgy and icons have had a great influence since Vatican II;
- The *via pulchritudinis*;
- Popular religiosity, especially following CELAM conferences at Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979), and the Vatican *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (2001).

One could go on and on.

It can surely be asked if all this more recent interest is a sign of healthy Mariology in our time. I think that in the study of the Theotokos there are issues that need attention from theologians and pastors. Can one speak of three Marys? We could

<sup>11</sup> Tina Beattie, “Mary and Spirituality,” in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. P. Sheldrake (London: SCM, 2005), 424-426 (at 426).

<sup>12</sup> Edward G. Farrugia, “Theotokologia,” in *Dizionario enciclopedico dell’oriente cristiano*, ed. E.G. Farrugia (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2003), 765-766.

have Mary of the theologians—about whom there is much writing, but not always dialogue. Secondly, there is Mary of the liturgy, in some ways austere and remote in the West, but more exuberant in the East. Liturgical prayer to the Father seems mostly to direct our thoughts to Mary's exemplarity and her intercession. But apart from the liturgical prayers in Masses, the Eucharistic Prayer and the sacramental rites, in which Mary is not directly addressed, liturgy also includes hymns, antiphons, and sequences in which there is straight invocation of the Theotokos. Thirdly, there is Mary of popular devotion, in which Mary is directly addressed. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death." The Mary of devotion covers a huge range of expression, but does have that tension that was popularized by Cardinal Peronio in the 1980s: different from us, yet one of us and concerned—the Mary of the *Hail Mary* in fact. People bring their sorrows to Mary, lighting candles before her . . . In this third category we have also the whole apparition scene, in which sometimes the medieval distortion of a severe and just Jesus countered by a gentle and merciful Mother is today replaced by Jesus of Divine Mercy and Mary as a stern, warning figure.

Now it seems to me that these three—the Mary of theology, liturgy, and popular piety—at times exist rather independently to the detriment of a healthy whole. I fear that Mary could at a deeper level be marginalized in contemporary Church life. The Theotokos of the theologians and of the liturgy does not necessarily include or lead us to a relationship with her.

It will be my contention that in practice there are three contemporary issues of great urgency in Mariology: 1) How do we understand the full implications of the Vatican II statement "Redeemed in a more exalted manner . . . she occupies a place in heaven which is highest after Christ and closest to us" (LG 53-54)? 2) What is the quality of the relationship with her? 3) How do we pastor those drawn into extremes in Marian devotion? With regard to the third concern, we are still paying for a neglect of extremes and deviations in the late-medieval period. Today we find theologians avoiding those of extreme views, and pastors running from them. But unbalanced positions or persons need care from both theological and pastoral perspectives.



With these introductory ideas, I would now like to move on to five crucial areas of recent writing on the Theotokos: the continuing relevance of Ephesus, the way of beauty, ecumenism, pneumatology, anthropology and spirituality.

### **The Continuing Relevance of Ephesus**

For this audience, there is surely no need to enter into the background of an evolution of the proclamation of the Theotokos at Ephesus in AD 431. The word “Theotokos” is difficult to translate. The patristic scholar Agnes Cunningham indicates that it means “Birth-giver of God, God-bearing mother; bringer forth of God.”<sup>13</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan favors the meaning “the one who gives birth to the one who is God,” which is rather close to the Latin *Deipara*.<sup>14</sup> He notes too that its linguistic history before its use by Bishop Alexandria of Antioch (d. 328) is still obscure and that it was in devotional use before Ephesus.<sup>15</sup>

About Ephesus itself we need merely record that *Theotokos* was questioned by Nestorius (d. ca. 451) who suggested *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer). Nestorius was concerned about preserving the integrity and completeness of the humanity of Christ. He could not accept that a human being could give birth to God. Ephesus accepted Cyril’s second letter as an authentic expression of Catholic faith: “Thus [the holy fathers of the Church] have not hesitated to call the holy Virgin Theotokos.” The issue is that of the “communication of idioms.” Because of the hypostatic union, whatever can be said about Christ’s manhood can be said about God. Jesus was born of the Virgin; hence God was born of the Virgin. The council’s position was received into the liturgy in the Leonine Sacrament and by later councils: Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (544), and Constantinople III (680-681). The doctrine remained in peaceful possession

<sup>13</sup> Agnes Cunningham, *The Significance of Mary* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1988), 43; see also George H. Tavard, *The Forthbringer of God: St. Bonaventure on the Virgin Mary* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries*, 55.

<sup>15</sup> Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries*, 58-61.

until the Reformation, and even then Luther continued to use it. Calvin and Zwingli were unhappy with it for fear of misunderstanding (Mary is not Mother of the Trinity or the Divinity); she is clearly more frequently affirmed as Mother of the Son of God.<sup>16</sup> As the Reformation progressed, the title Theotokos fell out of favor.

With time, the Church realized that this truth about Mary was one that protected truths about her Son. Any error about either his divinity or full humanity can be detected by the word Theotokos; if she was Mother of God, then her Son was truly God and truly man. Some contemporary Mariologists like to cite the lapidary affirmation of John Damascene: "The very name of the Mother of God contains the whole mystery of the economy of the Incarnation."<sup>17</sup>

There is also agreement on the problems of the time that called for the definition. The immediate difficulty was Nestorius who refused Theotokos, preferring Christotokos. But there were also other views, to which the Theotokos gives a clear rejection: Docetism, Gnosticism and Manichaeism.<sup>18</sup>

I suggest that these heresies are still present in various forms and that the doctrine of Theotokos remains still a valuable touchstone of orthodoxy and a test for many contemporary spiritualities. We may find that applying this ancient litmus test reveals many contemporary spiritualities wanting in many respects. Such spiritualities, with no place for the Mother of God, may then be deemed immediately defective, if not false.

Docetism was a tendency, which denied the real humanity to the Word; it was dualist in outlook, with unease with what is corporeal. Manichaeism held that Jesus descended from heaven as Saviour. Gnosticism in its myriad forms posits a salvation open to the enlightened elect. The saving Word becomes flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary;

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Groupe des Dombes, *Marie: dans le dessein de Dieu et la communion des saints*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Bayard, 1999), 77-89, nos. 136-184.

<sup>17</sup> *De fide orthodoxa* 3:12, PG 94:1029; see, e.g., Bruno Forte, *Maria la donna icona del Mistero: Saggio di mariologia simbolico-narrativa* (Milan: Paoline, 1989), 153.

<sup>18</sup> See Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary*, 107-131 for an outline history.

so the Theotokos is radically opposed to these errors. In each of these heretical tendencies we find salvation being made remote from ordinary people; the Good News, however, is that salvation through Jesus Christ is simple and available to all.

Many contemporary spiritualities, especially New Age ones, remove the earthiness of salvation through a man-God. Those who speak of a cosmic Christ or of Christ-consciousness often have little interest in who Jesus Christ is, where he came from or how the Incarnation, the one mediatorship of Christ, and, by association, the Theotokos, are still the acid test of any spirituality claiming to be Christian.

We still hear references to the Ephesian devotion to Diana/Artemis as having influenced Marian devotion. One can easily agree that a religious culture emphasising the feminine, along with veneration of a goddess, would facilitate devotion to Mary, but causality would be difficult to sustain, running into the old adages, *post hoc sed non propter hoc* or *non causa pro causa*. The 1992 American Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue speaks more cautiously of “parallels in the beliefs and practices of the surrounding culture connected with the veneration of female deities.”<sup>19</sup> The recent book of Paul Haffner is interesting in noting modern patterns of rationalism and enlightenment positions that make Mariology irrelevant.<sup>20</sup> The *Theotokos* criterion of the Fathers is still applicable today.

### **Theotokos and the Way of Beauty**

At the International Mariological and Marian Congress in 1975, Pope Paul VI<sup>21</sup> encouraged devotion to Mary through the “way of truth,” that is, biblical, historical and theological study. He then proposed “the way of beauty.” The most important contemporary influence still remains Hans Urs von Balthasar who began his work on theological aesthetics in

<sup>19</sup> *The One Mediator; the Saints and Mary*: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII, ed. H. G. Anderson, J. F. Stafford, and J. A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 89, no. 164.

<sup>20</sup> Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary*, 7-11.

<sup>21</sup> Papal address of May 16, 1975, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) 67 (1975): 338.

1962.<sup>22</sup> Though the theme of beauty is our concern here, the thought of Balthasar on theology and Mariology ranges much further. Balthasar is in some ways an ambiguous figure for contemporary theologians. He was still developing his theology up to the time of his death. Some will not like his conservative positions on questions such as ecclesiology or women. But his great sweeping genius and vision must be acknowledged, even if one separates from some of his practical conclusions. Then there is a problem with his enormous erudition, which leads to questions of method in theology. He draws great hypotheses that are frequently of awe-inspiring depth and sweep. But his bases can appear plucked from very different centuries—Origen, a twelfth-century Victorine mystic, or Charles Péguy. What he writes is beautiful and immensely stimulating, but can we say it is true? Can it be affirmed as theological fact? I was mostly formed theologically by a Jesuit who introduced me to Aquinas, Lonergan, and Balthasar. He used continually to ask, “Is that so” and “What do you mean by that?”—this last question making him a feared examiner. In the case of Balthasar, many Mariologists and theologians have accepted his Peter-Mary figures for the Church, with a preference for its Marian and feminine dimensions; they both belong to what Balthasar often calls the “Christological constellation” which cannot be ignored in any authentic presentation of the faith. However, he later changed, placing Mary above the New Testament practical and symbolic models of Peter (institutional), Paul (missionary), John (contemplative), and James (law and tradition). He might indeed have added the women, including in particular Mary Magdalene. Reception is not nearly so consistent in the case of this later Mariology. Final judgment on all this Mariology and the rest of his enormous output will rest with its reception by theologians and the Church. However,

<sup>22</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik*. Vol 1: *Schau der Gestalt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1962; 3rd ed. 1988)—Eng. trans., *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol. 1: *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius; New York: Crossroads, 1982). See the stimulating study by John Saward, *The Mysteries of March: Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Incarnation and Easter* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990).



his emphasis on beauty in all theology, “a terrible beauty” to use W. B. Yeats’s line, a beauty that is *fascinans et tremens*, is a lasting contribution to theology and to Mariology.

The patristic scholar Agnes Cunningham observed:

Contemplation on the icon of the *Theotokos* is contemplation of Mary in the beauty with which God has gifted and graced her in the mystery of her divine maternity. Here we recognize one aspect of the meaning the Mother of God, portrayed as *Theotokos*, can have for us. The “way of truth” and the “way of beauty” taken together represent the best theological traditions of both Eastern and Western Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

She further noted that in the West Christ is primarily represented as *Logos*, while in the East he is thought of as the *Eikon of God*; she concluded that “Word and Image together transmit a richer concept of the mystery of Christ than either” considered alone.<sup>24</sup>

In Mariology we need, I think, to take the *via pulchritudinis* much more seriously for many reasons. We still find quite a lot of classical Lutheran pessimism as well as anger towards Church institutions and teachings. Again, the secular quest of cosmetic beauty as a supreme end includes much idolatry. It is the role of theological beauty to bring us to the summit of religion, into awe and humble worship. What I observed nearly twenty years ago is still valid:

The feasts of Mary have perhaps another role also. As we struggle forwards on our pilgrim way, we cannot but be conscious of the cross, of the weight of sin, of difficulties in discipleship. The figure of Mary is a vision of beauty: it does not threaten; it only draws us on. Her feasts are moments of repose and refreshment on our journey. Beauty cannot be possessed; it can only be enjoyed. In a frenetic world, we need moments of tranquility. In times of stress and anxiety, we can raise our minds aloft. The way of beauty is an authentic approach to Mary. . . . It is also a way for all theology and for all spirituality.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cunningham, *The Significance of Mary*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Cunningham, *The Significance of Mary*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> “Epilogue” to the author’s *At Worship with Mary: A Pastoral and Theological Study* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1988), 230.

Though we need contemporary aesthetics, the Thomist doctrine of beauty still has a value. Speaking of the Son, St. Thomas says:

For beauty three things are required. Firstly, integrity or perfection; if this is diminished we find ugliness; secondly, there must be a due proportion or consonance; thirdly, brilliance, so that people say that what is brightly coloured is beautiful.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, spiritual beauty consists in a person's manner of life and conduct being in accord with the nature of spiritual glory.<sup>27</sup> The beautiful appeals to vision and to hearing and is equated with what is good.<sup>28</sup> The beauty of Mary is detected through the prism of faith. Its highest apprehension and expression is the fruit of contemplation and of mystical enlightenment.

Another dimension of the theme of beauty is Marian mysticism. Many of the mystics had visions and locutions involving Mary. But there are others who speak of being mystically formed by Mary.<sup>29</sup> In some cases it begins with a dedication or commitment to the Virgin, but then develops into gift. Such mystics have their experiences not only as special and personal gifts from God, but also in order that they might teach the Church. They are not eccentrics in the history of spirituality, but their lives and teaching tell us something central about the journey to God, namely, that divine union comes about through a person becoming more closely clothed with the virtues of Mary and through her continuing presence and accompaniment. More study is needed on this area both by Mariologists and by writers on mysticism.

<sup>26</sup> *Summa theologiae* 1°, q.39, a.8c.

<sup>27</sup> *Summa theologiae*, 2-2ae, q. 145, a.2c.

<sup>28</sup> *Summa theologiae*, 1°, q.5, a.4 ad 1; see 1-2ae, q.27, a. 1 ad 3.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., the Carmelites from the Low Countries, Michael of St. Augustine (d. 1684), Mary of St. Teresa Petijt (d. 1677); in Naples Ven. Seraphina of God, Prudentia Pisa (d. 1699); the French Jesuit P.-J. Picot de la Clorivière (d. 1820). See Christopher O'Donnell, "Maria," in *Dizionario del Carmelo*, ed. E. Boaga (Rome, forthcoming).

### **Ecumenism**

The history of ecumenical dialogue has been well studied, both at the level of achievements<sup>30</sup> and of method.<sup>31</sup> In general there has been a move from initial confrontation, to comparison, to consensus. Confrontation can be harsh or polite; in either case the assumption is that one side is right and the other is wrong. The solution is conversion or capitulation of one side. Comparison consists of stating positions or explaining documents in the hope that when explained, the difficulties will cease. Consensus is the attempt to get behind the division to see what truths there may be on which there can be agreement. All three methods have their place, but what is ultimately sought is consensus, either by discovering a higher viewpoint that embraces the opposing positions or, as ARCIC would say, by getting behind the controversies and re-receiving the tracing of Scripture and the Tradition afresh.

We do not need delay too long with the Eastern Churches; the Theotokos is their special glory. The God-bearer or Mother of God is celebrated in iconography, in daily liturgical commemorations, and in one of the great feasts of the liturgical year.<sup>32</sup> Her official liturgical title is: “Our All-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.” There is also the frequently repeated antiphon:

O you higher in honour than the cherubim and more glorious and beyond compare than the Seraphim, you gave birth to God the Word in virginity. You are truly Mother of God: you do we exalt.

Indeed until Sergei N. Bulgakov (d. 1944), the word “Mariology” was not much used in the East; some orthodox today still prefer “theotokology.”

<sup>30</sup> See the journals such as *One in Christ* (England), 1965–; *Irénikon*, 1926–; *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 1964–.

<sup>31</sup> See Gillian R. Evans, *Method in Ecumenical Theology: The Lessons So Far* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> Almost any book on Eastern theology will feature the *Theotokos*; more specialized; see Alexis Kniazeff, *La Madre di Dio nella Chiesa ortodossa* (Milan: San Paolo, 1993) passim.

The churches in the West have produced four important dialogue documents on the Theotokos during the past three decades.

### **1. U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (1978)**

The first was a scriptural study in 1978, *Mary in the New Testament*.<sup>33</sup> The tone at times seems rather cold and fretful, even in comparison with a similar Lutheran-Roman Catholic study *Peter in the New Testament* that had appeared five years earlier. The scriptural method did not allow very much progress on any disputed issue that could not be solved by scientific exegesis, as the authors freely admitted.<sup>34</sup> The value of this volume is the comprehensive material, carefully assessed, that was presented to scholars, albeit in somewhat narrow historical-critical terms.

### **2. U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (1992)**

The second collaborative study was again American, this time Lutherans and Catholics, *The One Mediator, the Saints and Mary*<sup>35</sup> which was the eighth volume of studies. In size it was the longest; in gestation it was also the most drawn out, taking thirteen sessions from 1983-1990. The document examined scriptural, patristic and more recent theological history and leads to interesting issues of convergence, but in the end serious differences are left. It could only express a hope that the two Churches might achieve partial communion in which Marian dogmas would not be binding on Lutherans, with ongoing discussion leading in time to full communion and union.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and John Reumann, eds., *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment* by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars (MaryNT) (Minneapolis: Fortress; London: Chapman, 1978).

<sup>34</sup> E.g., on the "brothers of the Lord," "the solution favoured by scholars will in part depend on the authority they allot to later church insights." *MaryNT* 72; on the virginal conception 291-292. See the section in ch. 2, n. 4 "The Relation of the Biblical Evidence to Post-Biblical Mariology" *MaryNT* 28-31.

<sup>35</sup> *The One Mediator, the Saints and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992).

<sup>36</sup> *The One Mediator*, 123.



After all that work the discussion in a sense had reached an impasse: there were obvious agreements, but areas in which there was little progress, especially the practical issue of the invoking of Mary and the saints.<sup>37</sup> On the Mother of God, it noted: "With regard to Mary, Lutherans affirm her as the 'God-bearer' (*theotokos*) and hold her in high esteem as the most praise-worthy of all the saints."<sup>38</sup> It also added:

Among the saints who have played a role in God's plan of salvation for humanity, Mary who bore Christ, is in particular to be honored, as "God-bearer" (*theotokos*) and as the pure, holy and "most blessed Virgin" (*laudatissima virgo*).<sup>39</sup>

In these two dialogues there is not much question of a relationship with Mary. The word "honored" may not imply much affectivity, much less affinity or empathy. Intercession, if pursued, implies some relationship. One could characterize these dialogues in saying that they do not look on Mary in an "I-Thou" rapport, but rather as "I/we-She." There is also for some a lurking reluctance to see any continuing role for Mary after the Baptism of Jesus, except to be a model of obedient faith.

It is perhaps only a little harsh to suggest that the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues on Mary have not got much beyond the first two C's, confrontation and comparison. To find substantial consensus we have to look to the last two dialogues—the Groupe des Dombes and the Seattle ARCIC statement.

### **3. *Groupe des Dombes Dialogue (1997, 1998)***

The third Marian dialogue is from the Groupe des Dombes, which has been meeting yearly from the time of the Abbé Paul Couturier in 1935, mostly at the Cistercian monastery of Les Dombes, 40 km. NE of Lyon. It is an independent group, having no mandate from any Church. The theological

<sup>37</sup> See "The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in North America," *One in Christ* 34 (1998): 268-289; G. Tavadon on p. 271, and J. Reumann on p. 281.

<sup>38</sup> *The One Mediator*, 40, no. 49.

<sup>39</sup> *The One Mediator*, 61, no. 103/15; cf. "Lutheran Reflections," 125-26, no. 1/c.

method used by the Groupe des Dombes is based on the spiritual conviction that reconciliation between churches can come about only as the fruit of a process of conversion on the part of the different confessions—converting one another, and together being converted to God and his Christ.<sup>40</sup> The Groupe des Dombes published two booklets arising from its discussion on Mary's role in God's plan of salvation (1997 and 1998). These were united with a new title, *Marie dans le dessein de Dieu et la communion des saints*.<sup>41</sup> We can note as usual in Dombes documents the importance of spirituality, arising largely from the extended prayer three times daily during its meetings. The document is in two parts, each with two chapters. Part one has an outline of history from the New Testament to the twentieth century. It then embarks on an innovative reading of the scriptures about Mary in the light of Trinitarian articles of the Creed. The Group states clearly: "Mary in the confessions of faith does not differ from Mary in scripture."<sup>42</sup> Thus it takes up in the first article of the Creed, "Mary: Creature, Woman, and Daughter of Israel." The exposition here is of Mary as a woman, wife and mother.

The second article of the Creed is exposed in a section titled "Mary, Mother of Jesus: Christ, Lord, and Son of God" and tells us of the place of Mary in God's plan and the history of salvation. It notes:

The fact that Mary was a virgin when her first child was born is a statement of theological importance about the identity of the Son; it is not an

<sup>40</sup> See B. Sesboué, "Groupe des Dombes," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. N. Lossky et al., 2nd ed. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2002), 503-505; see also C. E. Clifford, "Dialogue and Method: Learning from the Groupe des Dombes," *One in Christ* 38 (2003): 43-57, at 45 and 47.

<sup>41</sup> Original ed. published in Paris, 1999; Eng. ed. by Alain Blancy and Maurice Jourjon and the Dombes Group, *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints: Towards a Common Christian Understanding*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002). A fine study on this document by Thomas A. Thompson, S.M., will appear in a forthcoming collection of ESBVM papers (from the Bath Congress, 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, preface to part I, 11.

assertion of moral purity about the mother. The important thing was to show respect for a mystery and to call attention to a truly unique birth by means of a sign.<sup>43</sup>

Here the Groupe des Dombes is not afraid to insist on the virginity of Mary. In contemporary theology and among Christians there is a tendency to flatten the mysteries to make them accessible, the reductionism so frequently censured by Cardinal Ratzinger at the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith. The Groupe grasps that however much we wish to stress the humanity of Mary and her womanliness, there is a sense in which she is unique in her sharing in the mystery of Christ.

On the Fourth Gospel it notes:

The Gospel of John structures three elements: Mary-as-Mother-of Jesus, Mary-as-Woman, and Mary-as-Mother-of-the-disciples in a theological gradation: starting with Mary “Mother of Jesus,” it proceeds by way of Mary as “woman” to Mary “mother of the disciples” with a new kind of motherhood that is of a different order than the first and that the church professes with him.<sup>44</sup>

This goes markedly further than the 1992 Lutheran-Catholic dialogue<sup>45</sup> and the 1978 New Testament study.<sup>46</sup>

The third article of the Creed develops the theme “Mary in the Communion of Saints.” Here the Groupe restricts itself to her pre-eminence, not assigning a special role. It is in the second part of its document that the Groupe des Dombes touches at

<sup>43</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 60, no. 145.

<sup>44</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 68, no. 184.

<sup>45</sup> See *The One Mediator*, 81, no. 154: “The new mother-son relationship proclaimed by the dying Jesus reflects the replacement of his natural family by a new family of disciples. As in the Lucan writings, the mother of Jesus thus meets the criterion of the spiritual, eschatological family of Jesus. Mary’s role is a symbol for other Christians.” It comes as a surprise that the dialogue participants could outline the late medieval period without any reference to the spiritual motherhood of Mary—see nos. 172-181 (pp. 93-99). They referred to the pastoral letter of the American bishops (1974) “Behold your Mother: Woman of Faith” without adverting to the second and third words of the title (no. 217, p. 114), though “filial love towards our Mother” is mentioned in a quotation found in the Catholic Reflections (no. 13, p. 121).

<sup>46</sup> *Mary in the New Testament*, 206-218.

least the neuralgic point of spiritual motherhood. In the section on challenges to Catholics to conversion, it gives an outline of the actual position of Catholics followed by a warning:

It is a historical fact that the person of Mary has played a key part in the popular religion spread by Christian evangelization. She has a threefold role:

- closeness: she is the mother who is attentive to all her children;
- defence of cultural identity: she is celebrated as possessing the traits of each people;
- protection and healing: she is supposed to set people free of all oppressions and illnesses.

Theological and pastoral discernment must be on guard against scorning the faith of the humble, even while evangelizing it in a way that keeps a mother goddess from hiding behind the traits of Mary and keeps the faithful from thinking that an affective relationship with Mary contains the whole of Christianity and the whole of the church. In like manner, the appeal to the sense of the faith of the faithful (*sensus fidelium*) must be used with caution, for what is taken as such may spring from religious feeling rather than from the Christian faith.<sup>47</sup>

It also warns against Hypostatic Union language, a point we shall take up shortly.

In the section on Protestant conversion, there is no mention of spiritual motherhood. However, in the final section on doctrinal conversion, which deals with “The ‘Cooperation’ or Active Response of Mary,” there is a development. In a quotation it gives seven statements about her beginning with the thought that she is “sister”:

Mary, younger sister, “the little girl,” and by that very fact the elder sister of us human beings.

before ending

Mary, more than our mother; forever “Mary, our sister.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 115, no. 291.

<sup>48</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 125, no. 323, citing André and Francine Dumas, *Marie de Nazareth* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1989), 98-99.



Though we should remember that the Dombes Group is here considering a specific point, viz. the cooperation or active response of Mary, it is surprising nonetheless that at the end it cites a remarkable passage from Luther: Mary becomes, he says,

our mother and we become her children. Such is the overflowing goodness and consolation of God that he offers humanity such a treasure, by making Mary its true mother, Christ its brother, and God its Father.<sup>49</sup>

Towards the end of the document the *Groupe* notes that a problem for Catholics is “perhaps above all, a Protestant resistance to the realm of affectivity, a resistance preserved over the centuries by ceaseless controversies on the Virgin Mary.”<sup>50</sup> In the conclusion we see what is common to Protestants and Catholics. Not everything is settled,

But we accept a common standard: that Mary is never to be separated from her Son and that the “servant of the Lord,” for whom “the Mighty One has done great things,” glorifies her Son as her Saviour and ours. We contemplate Christ in the very mystery of the cross. According to St. John, everything was “finished” after Jesus had entrusted his mother and his disciple to each other . . . [W]e find Mary thus present in God’s plan and at the very beginning of the communion of saints.<sup>51</sup>

The *Groupe des Dombes* is at the very end delicately putting a foot forward in the controversial issue of spiritual motherhood.

#### **4. Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC, 1966- )**

The so-called ARCIC method arising from the Common Declaration of Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey aims at a consensus. It is very important to take note of what is called the

<sup>49</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 125, no. 324, citing a sermon from 1522 (*Kirchenpostille*, WA 10/1/1).

<sup>50</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 130, no. 336.

<sup>51</sup> Blancy et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 130, no. 337.

ARCIC method approved by the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury: “founded on the gospels and on the ancient common traditions.” It is not merely to compare differences, but rather to get behind them to the doctrines as presented and lived from the New Testament time and up to the Reformation.

A very important characteristic of the ARCIC documents is the importance given to prayer and liturgy; they are not mere discussions of theological affirmations. Both Church traditions have a strong liturgical sense and they see doctrinal traditions both as an expression of prayer experience and nourished by worship. This emphasis on prayer goes back to the Common Declaration. We see also the growing self-confidence of the ARCIC statements as the members’ grasp of their own method becomes more assured.

We should note too that the previous agreed statement, *Authority in the Church III*,<sup>52</sup> had used the notion of “re-reception.”<sup>53</sup> The Church “must continue to be free to receive the apostolic Tradition in new ways according to the situations by which it is confronted.”

Our interest here is quite limited to the Theotokos and spiritual motherhood—a topic even more restricted than the dialogue on authority. However, in ARCIC’s *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, we note that already in the statement *Authority in the Church II* (1981) significant areas of agreement were recorded, including:

We agree in recognising the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotókos*), in observing her festivals, and in according her honour in the communion of saints.<sup>54</sup>

More clearly than other dialogues it notes that a consideration of Mary involves “meditating with wonder and gratitude on the whole sweep of salvation history: creation, election, the

<sup>52</sup> *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* (London: CTS—Toronto: Anglican Book Centre—New York: Church Publishing, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> *The Gift of Authority*, 15-16, nos. 24-25.

<sup>54</sup> ARCIC Agreed Statement, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (London—Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2005), 3, no. 2.

Incarnation, passion and resurrection of Christ, the gift of the Spirit in the Church, and the final vision of eternal life for all God's people in the new creation."<sup>55</sup>

It states moreover:

The Trinitarian pattern of divine action in these scenes [Annunciation and Visitation] is striking: the Incarnation of the Son is initiated by the Father's election of the Blessed Virgin and mediated by the Holy Spirit. Equally striking is Mary's *fiat*, her "Amen" given in faith and freedom to God's powerful Word communicated by the angel (Lk 1:38).<sup>56</sup>

In its treatment of John 19, ARCIC goes beyond the previous dialogues. Towards the end of the document the language is cautious but open:

The motherly role of Mary, first affirmed in the gospel accounts of her relationship to Jesus, has been developed in a variety of ways. Christian believers acknowledge Mary to be the mother of God incarnate. As they ponder our Saviour's dying word to the beloved disciple, "behold your mother" (John 19:27) they may hear an invitation to hold Mary dear as 'mother of the faithful': she will care for them as she cared for her son in his hour of need. Hearing Eve called "the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20), they may come to see Mary as mother of the new humanity, active in her ministry of pointing all people to Christ, seeking the welfare of all the living. We are agreed that, while caution is needed in the use of such imagery, it is fitting to apply it to Mary, as a way of honouring her distinct relationship to her son, and the efficacy in her of his redeeming work.<sup>57</sup>

The reception of the ARCIC document on Mary has been mixed. In a recent article I suggested that it was a mistake to give a summary. Some people seem to have read it and cried "foul," naming Pius IX and Pius XII. To appreciate what is in the

<sup>55</sup> ARCIC, *Mary: Grace and Hope*, 8, no. 6.

<sup>56</sup> ARCIC, *Mary: Grace and Hope*, 17, no. 16. We might note too the easy use of "Blessed Virgin," generally avoided in previous dialogues; see also "We are agreed in our belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary as *Theotokos*;" no. 51, p. 48.; no. 58, p. 56; and, in a final paragraph, "the ancient common traditions about the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God Incarnate" (no. 80, p. 81).

<sup>57</sup> ARCIC, *Mary: Grace and Hope*, 72, no. 72.

summary, one must have tried to walk the same intellectual and affective journey as its authors.

### **Pneumatological Aspect**

Though there is general agreement on the Ephesus history, there are a number of controversial issues surrounding the Theotokos and the Holy Spirit, especially at the Annunciation. These surfaced and became significant after the publication of the volume by Leonardo Boff, *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and Religious Experience*.<sup>58</sup> It would be convenient to point up this controversy by looking at some of the literature surrounding the teaching of St. Maximilian Kolbe (d. 1941). It is well to look at the Kolbe material, since it is continually cited and in a sense undergirds studies on the possible dogmas of Coredemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Universal Advocate.

There are immediate difficulties, some at least in part arising from the strongly Scotist theology of St. Maximilian and his commentators.<sup>59</sup> The danger here is how non-Scotists might misinterpret the language and ideas. Instead of a dialogue we could have a school that becomes closed, internally self-affirming, avoided by those outside. During a course at Dayton given, I think, in the late 1960s or early 1970s, René Laurentin observed that mainstream theologians avoided tangling with Mariologists, who, he said, tended to be fierce polemicists. Already one can note with regret a return to harsh polemical writing.<sup>60</sup> The

<sup>58</sup> English ed. published in San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987; from the original Brazilian *O rosto materno de Deus: Ensaio interdisciplinar sobre o feminino e suas formas religiosas* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1979).

<sup>59</sup> There can, however, be little dispute on Bonaventure's three modes of theology: *symbolic* (seen in faith and expressed in creedal formulae and sacraments), *proper* (as in academy), *experientia*—contemplative or mystical (the *theologia cordis* of the Franciscan school or the theology of the saints in the spirituality of the Christian East).

<sup>60</sup> See Peter D. Fehlner, *St. Maximilian Ma. Kolbe, Martyr of Charity, Pneumatologist: His Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), where Bruno Forte is twice dismissed in footnotes as a "Neo-Hegelian process theologian" (8, n. 12; 83, n. 183); and Stefano De Fiores and Stanislaw C. Napiórkowski are said to have modernistic sympathies (49). Elsewhere, he speaks darkly about theologians who minimize mysteries such as the Immaculate Conception, Coredemption, etc., always having a Jansenistic mentality (123, n. 267).



difficulty of the matter can be indicated by the strong reaction shown by the *Groupe des Dombes* to an idea encountered in the works of some Catholic theologians. In this context, they observe (no. 294):

While it is legitimate to study further the connection between Mary and the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to set up a relationship between her and the Spirit that can be compared with the union of humanity and divinity in Jesus.

Footnote 5 at this point states that “it is not possible to maintain a ‘personal (hypostatic) communication’ of the Holy Spirit to the Virgin Mary, as L. Boff does in his *Trinité et société* (Paris: Cerf, 1990) 247.”<sup>61</sup> One could of course query if the treatment of Boff here is fully accurate;<sup>62</sup> at the very least Boff can be accused of misconstruing the meaning of Kolbe.<sup>63</sup>

Though I am no expert on Bl. Duns Scotus, I would wish to indicate some of the issues that invite dialogue and examination. The issue is not Kolbe’s doctrinal orthodoxy; canonization is a guarantee of sure and true dogma. A quite different question is whether Kolbe’s theology, that is, his way of understanding the mysteries, is acceptable, wise or fruitful.

Fehlner gives the three cardinal principles of Kolbe’s pneumatology. In each case he notes that it is to be understood in a Scotist or Franciscan sense. But the public discourse of theology demands that it be made intelligible and this Fehlner attempts to do. The difficult language of Kolbe is punctuated by the Latin *quasi*, indicating analogy. Problems will then surely arise in an ecumenical context from the post-Barthian distrust of analogy. We have to keep in mind “the Franciscan thesis of the absolute primacy of Christ and the joint predestination of Jesus and Mary Immaculate formulated in Scotist terms.”<sup>64</sup> There are then three main issues.

<sup>61</sup> Blancy et al, *Mary in the Plan of God*, 116, no. 294, with n. 5 on p. 156.

<sup>62</sup> See Fehlner, *St. Maximilian ... Pneumatologist*, 4, n. 6. Later he accuses Boff of completely falsifying Maximilian (9, n.12). He takes exception to Boff’s rendering of “*Spiritus Sanctus quasi incarnatus*” as “quasi-hypostatic union” (4, n.6).

<sup>63</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian ... Pneumatologist*, 50.

<sup>64</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian ... Pneumatologist*, 114; see also 30, n. 45.

Firstly, the Immaculate Conception is the Holy Spirit *quasi incarnatus*. Fehlner explains:

As the Saint [Maximilian Kolbe] puts it, this is a unique union between two persons remaining really distinct as persons, but so united as to enjoy a single personality and a single name.<sup>65</sup>

The problem here is the tension between “really distinct as persons” and enjoying “a single personality.” The analogy is bold, but does it point us in the right direction? Allied with this is the statement that Mary is quasi-transubstantiated into the Holy Spirit:

Mary only is Mother of God and Mediatrix of all graces . . . her influence on souls is direct and immediate like that of the Holy Spirit . . . [and] consecration to Her is transubstantiation into her and so into the Holy Spirit, and so possession of her and of us by the Holy Spirit and by the Trinity.<sup>66</sup>

This is later exposed and explained by Fr. Fehlner:

[Mary is transubstantiated] into the Spirit in the order of *esse*, more exactly in virtue of this perfect union of wills, i.e. her *unique* virginal purity, makes possible that mutual fecundity of Spirit and Virgin in the order of *fieri*, that of virginal maternity and maternal virginity, and the consequent *mutual possession* of Mother and Son in the order of salvation.<sup>67</sup>

In evaluating the use of transubstantiation language, we would be well advised to look to its technical sense given to us at Trent’s discussion of the Eucharist. The word was chosen to exclude various opinions such as virtual presence or compaction, so that Trent insisted that the whole substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the Body of Christ our Lord and the whole substance of the wine into his Blood, a conversion aptly and properly called transubstantiation.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian . . . Pneumatologist*, 51. See Kolbe, Scritti, 1286: “*L’Immacolata è lo Spirito Sancto in certo qual modo incarnato.*”

<sup>66</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian . . . Pneumatologist*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian . . . Pneumatologist*, 63-64.

<sup>68</sup> Trent, sess. 13, ch. 4 and canon 2—Denzinger-Schönmetzer, 1642, 1652; see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1376.

The question is then, can the gifting of Mary by the Spirit and her total surrender to the divine will be aptly and truly described as transubstantiation? I am not convinced by attempts to keep separate the distinction of persons in this use of language.

Secondly, the Immaculate is *quasi part of the Trinity*. The *quasi* indicates that it is not in a quantitative sense (a part of a cake), but qualitative in the relations of the Immaculate to each Person of the Trinity. She is the supreme example of sharing in the divine nature (see 2 Peter 1:4); she shares in the circumcession of the divine Persons. Four ideas are involved: *closeness to the Trinity*; *similitude* through affective exemplars in love; *possession and mutual possession*; finally, she is *personification—icon of the Holy Spirit*.<sup>69</sup> Here there are at least assertions of the closeness as the closest of all creatures to God, but one can again ask if the language is helpful.

The third notion of Kolbe is that Mary is a complement of the Trinity, albeit in a Scotist sense. The idea of the Holy Spirit as complement of the Trinity is found in some patristic and medieval writers. According to Fehlner, this means a distinctive and exclusive feature of the spousal relationship with the Holy Spirit, so exalted, so singular that she could become and became the Mother of God: she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>70</sup>

The final step is to speak of the Holy Spirit as the Uncreated Immaculate Conception. Conception is used as the distinctive term connoting the procession or spiration of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son. In a final dictation on the morning of his definitive arrest by the Gestapo, Maximilian considered the Trinity:

And who is the Holy Spirit? He is the fruit of the love of the Father and the Son. The fruit of a created love is a created conception. Therefore (*pertanto*) the fruit of the love, of the prototype of this created love, is nothing but a conception. The Spirit is therefore an uncreated eternal

<sup>69</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian ... Pneumatologist*, 54-70.

<sup>70</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian ... Pneumatologist*, 99.

conception, and is the prototype of any kind of conception of life in the universe . . . The Spirit, therefore is a most holy conception, infinitely holy, immaculate.<sup>71</sup>

The term is justified in Scotist terms on the primacy of love rather than of the intellect and seems to claim that the saint received the suggestion from Our Lady as Fehlner comments:

If Our Lady in virtue of her sinless conception is Spouse of the Holy Ghost and Spouses share the same name, then the name of Mary being Immaculate Conception, so also the proper name of the Holy Spirit is Immaculate Conception. That name is the precise definition of spousal love, what St. Bonaventure means by supernatural similitude.<sup>72</sup>

This stage of Kolbe's thought is from the very end of his life. To my Thomist ears such language as the Spirit being the uncreated Immaculate Conception would bring to mind the "conceits" used by the seventeenth-century English metaphysical poets—a flash of adroit or witty insight that cannot be pushed too far. A further problem arises when further deductions are drawn from an analogous statement, so that the difficulty of interpretation intensifies. To take a point: Bonaventure observes "*Sicut et Deus nos venit per ipsam, ita per ipsam nos oportet redire in Deum.*"<sup>73</sup> The first part of Bonaventure's dictum is clear; but what in practice is the meaning of the *oportet* in the second part of the aphorism? Fehlner, citing Bonaventure and Maximilian, suggests that there is *de facto* no other way whereby the Son comes to us or we to the Son.<sup>74</sup>

With some hesitation I would make some comments, or perhaps better, raise some questions on St. Maximilian and generally on the writing we find around the triple definition.

<sup>71</sup> *Scritti di Massimiliano Kolbe*, one-vol. ed. (Rome: Editrice Nazionale Milizia dell'Immacolata, 1997), 2329-2330, no. 1318. The suggestion that he was following Our Lady's wishes in this final writing (no. 1304n, p. 2298) needs careful interpretation; there is a parallel in the opening pages of Therese of Lisieux's *Story of a Soul* (Ms A, 2r).

<sup>72</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian . . . Pneumatologist*, 111, citing Kolbe, *Scritti*, 1319 (in place of 1318).

<sup>73</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian . . . Pneumatologist*, 172 and 138, citing III Sent.

<sup>74</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian . . . Pneumatologist*, 74.



Firstly, one can wonder at the insistence of the use of the word “Immaculate.” It may be a shorthand reference to the Immaculate Conception. It was, as we know, her own stated identity at Lourdes, “I am the Immaculate Conception.” But there were other names that Mary seems to have given herself in various apparitions.<sup>75</sup> To return to the 1854 definition which was framed in negative terms by Pius IX: “omnipotentis Dei gratia et privilegio . . . ab omni culpae labe praeservatam immunem.”<sup>76</sup> The word “Immaculate” in this context involves a double negative. It can be expressed in simple language by saying whatever original sin is Mary never had it. But original sin is only sin by analogy, and indeed it expresses a privation. Positively the Immaculate Conception involves Mary being grace-filled from the first moment of her existence. An emphasis on Immaculate and on Mary being all-pure may not immediately make us think of grace-filled. (A sterile glass is of interest only when it is filled by an attractive liquid.) Again, whilst we must avoid at all times a quantitative view of grace, which can be implied by language like “filled,” we must also allow that Mary grew in grace, and that this growth—again not in a quantitative sense—continued during her life, and will indeed throughout eternity.

Secondly, there is a question about what did the Holy Spirit do at Mary’s conception, at the Annunciation, and, to help clarify the matter, at Pentecost. Many, if not most, theologians today will speak of a real mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: the

<sup>75</sup> Apparitions are mainly exhortatory and non-doctrinal, but note, however, some more “dogmatic” statements: Tre Fontane (1952), “I am the one who dwells in the Trinity”; Lourdes, “I am the Immaculate Conception”; Banneux (1933), “I am the Virgin of the Poor . . . I am the Mother of God”; Guadalupe (1531), “I am Mary, holy and perpetual Virgin . . . Believe me, I am your mother and the Mother of all humankind”; Kibeho, Rwanda (1982), “I am the Mother of the Word . . . I am Mother of Heaven . . . the Immaculate Conception”; Amsterdam (1945-1951), “I am the Lady, Mary, Mother of all Nations.” Accounts by visionaries are of course notoriously hard to discern.

<sup>76</sup> Heinrich Denzinger, Adolf Schönmetzer, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (various eds.), 2803 (hereafter referred to as *DS*). See also Josef Neuner, Jacques Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (5th rev. and enl. ed.; New York: Alba House, 1990), 709 (hereafter referred to as *ND*).

Spirit is sent by the Father in the name of Jesus (*en tô onomati mou*, John 14:26), the Comforter whom Jesus said “I will send to you from the Father” (*para tou patros*, John 15:26), “I will send the promise of my Father upon you” (Luke 24:49).

At the Annunciation Mary is told “the Holy Spirit will come upon you” (Luke 1:35), an action resulting in what would later be summarized in the Creed as “born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit” (*natus est de Spiritu sancto ex Maria Virgine*)<sup>77</sup> or “became flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary” (*ek pneumatos hagios kai marias*).<sup>78</sup> Is this a mission, a proper action of the Holy Spirit, or are we dealing with appropriation? If it is appropriation, we need to be careful in how we might present the action. It would then be an action of the whole Trinity. All external activities are common to the Trinity<sup>79</sup>; there is, however, no *quartum quid*, but each of the Persons works according to his eternal personhood in the common action of the One God. In the Annunciation the Son is sent by the Father. But it is the Son through whom the Spirit proceeds from the Father. The synergy of the Spirit and Mary in the Incarnation means that the Spirit, in his identity of coming from the Father and through the Son, is forming a human nature for the Son with Mary.

Can we go further than appropriation to understand a saying like Kolbe’s “Mary possesses all the treasures of grace and the Father bestows no grace except by way of the maternal mediation of the Immaculate.”<sup>80</sup> A passage from Kolbe’s last writing raises some serious questions:

In Jesus there are two natures (divine and human) and one person (divine), whereas here there are two natures and two persons, the Holy Spirit and the Immaculate, but with the union of divinity and humanity surpassing any conception. From the moment in which the union was activated the Holy Spirit did not give any graces, the Father did not bestow through the Son and the Spirit the supernatural life in the soul

<sup>77</sup> Symbol of Hippolytus—*DS* 10; *ND* 2. See *DS* 13, 16; *ND* 3, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Constantinople, *DS* 150; *ND* 12.

<sup>79</sup> Council of Florence: “omnia sunt unum ubi non obviat relationis oppositio” (*DS* 1330), from Anselm, *De process Sp.* 2 (PL 1598:288C).

<sup>80</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian Pneumatologist*, 27-28, n. 41, sees the biblical basis as the fiat of Luke 1:26-38 and John 19:25-27.

except through the Mediatrix of all graces, the Immaculate, with her assent, with her collaboration. She receives the whole treasury of graces as her own (*in proprietà*) and distributes them to whomsoever and in the measure that she herself wishes.<sup>81</sup>

The last sentence raises little difficulty if it means that Mary is so attuned to the divine will that she gives the grace God wishes to give each person. To suggest any independent initiative to Mary as Mediatrix is intricate, and raises the whole *problematic* of her mediation. Though Fehlner acknowledges explicitly the distance between the creature and creator,<sup>82</sup> some of the language might allow one to overlook momentarily the chasm between infinite and finite. Mary is closer to my sinful self than she is to God.

Even though Fehlner regards the view of Ignazio Calabuig as misplaced, giving a skewed interpretation, I find myself in sympathy. Calabuig stated that speaking of the Immaculate Conception as the Holy Spirit *quasi incarnatus*, however orthodox in theory, would tend to confirm the Protestant criticism that in Catholic practice, if not theology, Mary takes the place of the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit is subordinated to Mary.<sup>83</sup> We are faced with the same dilemma as Paul: what is lawful may not be expedient, so that we may have to forgo statements that could prove harmful (see 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

### Anthropological Aspects

Recent exegesis has not only discovered new insights in these texts, but has used the Old Testament background to show us the Messiah and his Mother.<sup>84</sup> Of particular importance are the many studies that help us to appreciate what it was to have been a woman, a mother, a widow, and a mother of an executed criminal in the first century.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Kolbe, *Scritti*, no. 1310.

<sup>82</sup> Fehlner, *St. Maximilian ... Pneumatologist*, 56.

<sup>83</sup> Cited in Fehlner, *St. Maximilian ... Pneumatologist*, 49, n. 91.

<sup>84</sup> E.g., Bertrand Buby, *Mary of Galilee*, 3 vols. (New York: Alba, 1994-1997).

<sup>85</sup> E.g., Doris Donnelly, ed., *Mary, Woman of Nazareth: Biblical and Theological Perspectives* (New York—Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1989) and the writings of feminist exegetes like Pheme Perkins, Phyllis Trible.

Cunningham notes that a “unique” motherhood that is divine, spiritual and universal is unacceptable to feminists; they reject the image of a submissive, docile maiden, preserved from sin and cast in a blue and white perfection. Who can relate to such a person, feminists ask? Women need a real “flesh-and-blood” model to survive in a male-dominated world.<sup>86</sup>

Even though one might take it for granted, it is nonetheless still important to emphasize the womanhood of Mary; the Holy Spirit and a woman gave us Jesus the Redeemer. But we have had a long tradition of considering Mary as abstract, as remote, so that her womanliness became obscured in a sexless image of conceptual beauty in theological abstraction and in sentimental piety. Among the greatest challenges to Mariology today—many would say to the Church—are the issues that arise in feminist writing. The Church, a mammoth patriarchal institution riven by scandals, must repent and take on the deepest values of feminism: equality, compassion, and liberating justice.

In Mariology there is today a huge spectrum ranging from sensitive writing on Mary by conservative writers to complete rejection of Church, even Christianity, as irredeemably sexist and patriarchal. In extreme feminist writing we find in various guises a “conspiracy theory”: the patriarchal Church fobbed off Mary on women, and got on with its institutional patriarchal dominance. In more recent years there are fewer angry feminisms in theological writing, but it is still an area needing attention.

In walking this minefield one can make some observations:

- The Church is patriarchal, as are the Old and New Testaments.
- Pope John Paul II indicated that male domination arose as the result of sin<sup>87</sup>; we may conclude that patriarchy, its continuance, is not free from sin either.

<sup>86</sup> Cunningham, *The Significance of Mary*, 64-65.

<sup>87</sup> Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988), no. 10.



- The biological facts of conception were only discovered in 1828, so ignorance in the Fathers and Church writers is hardly surprising.
- In the Fathers we often find confusion among theology, aesthetics, and poor physiology.
- Most of the reflection on Mary in the Church's history has been by males. Some patriarchy and distortion is therefore only to be expected.
- Hence the urgency of our reading and listening to women's accounts of Mary. The women who were saints and mystics are a profound source for women's Marian reflections, though we should expect that they may be conditioned by their times (see frequent derogatory statements about women in Teresa of Avila who is adopting a rhetoric of subordination and feminism to protect herself from the Inquisition and to allow her work to be accepted).
- Though Church teaching and writers speak often of virginity, there is as yet no satisfactory theology of virginity.

In her recent magisterial book Elizabeth Johnson surveys contemporary Mariology from a feminist perspective.<sup>88</sup> She examines various feminist positions before looking at, and ultimately finding inadequate, two of the more accepted recent pictures of Mary: the ideal face of woman and the maternal face of God. She then seeks to place Mary in the religious, social, and political context of first-century Galilee, before examining the thirteen pieces of mosaic that constitute the New Testament evidence about Mary. Her main thesis is that unless we keep in the foreground Mary as a historical woman, who now dwells in the Communion of Saints, we shall inevitably find a distorted and incomplete picture. Mary has to be rooted in the earthiness of the New Testament world.

<sup>88</sup>Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York—London: Continuum, 2003).

### **1. Anthropology and Dogmas**

Anthropology gives new insight into each of the Marian dogmas. We can see them telling us not only what is unique to Mary, but also what relates her to our humanity. At the deepest level they show Mary is not only an exception, but she is also a type. Her Immaculate Conception testifies to the power of God's grace eternally preparing her for her role in salvation history. Her motherhood had all the psychological, physical, social and spiritual values, joys and sorrows experienced by women worldwide. Her virginity is more than physical integrity or sexual abstinence; it includes a particular form of total commitment. Here, from the mid-fourth century, the replacement of martyrdom by virginity as a model of holiness is particularly significant. Finally, her Assumption is a statement of the glory of the body and spirit. Mary already has a full place in the Communion of Saints; others share in the glory to a greater or lesser extent. The Marian dogmas, therefore, place Mary in the fullness of womanhood as experienced by women of all ages and cultures.

### **2. Bible**

When we look to the Bible and to the socio-economic life of women in a patriarchal society oppressed by powerful and greedy Romans and their associates, we find Mary being a women sharing in poverty and marginalization. The experience of the dispossessed is a key hermeneutical tool for understanding the scriptures. As the *Constitutions* of my own Carmelite Order state: "We propose to re-read the bible also from the perspective of the poor, of the oppressed, of the marginalised."<sup>89</sup> Read in this way, the passages about Mary, and not only the *Magnificat*, speak with great urgency for our time and for every age.

### **3. Ecumenism**

A presentation of the Theotokos as a first-century woman has two advantages for ecumenism. It can help the Eastern churches to root Mary still more profoundly in salvation history. The Mary of Eastern liturgy and icons can seem remote from human struggle. For the Protestant tradition, which has

<sup>89</sup> *Carmelite Constitutions* (1995), no. 116.

been at times quite patriarchal, it can be a non-threatening presentation of Mary. Protestant thought and life need to discover the person of Mary, rather than focus too exclusively on her role. Miriam of Nazareth holds profound possibilities.

#### **4. Pastoral Dimension**

In the Catholic Church at present we find two strong and well-populated extreme positions, with many people in some place or other along the continuum. There are many who have little place for Mary in their lives, people who are not attracted by traditional piety or images. At the other extreme there are people with deep love for Mary and obvious piety, but one that is often somewhat distorted. Seeing Mary in her culture, and simultaneously remembering her place in the Communion of Saints, allows her to be a figure for men and women today. This view can loosen up patriarchy, and allow people to see again the gospel values of compassion, equality and love. An emphasis on anthropology may seem remote or even to denigrate the Theotokos. But theology must always beware of reductionism, whereby mysteries are contracted, making them manageable or subjectively attractive for ourselves; this tendency, however, is to be resisted. Though Mary comes close to us in devotion, we need also to ponder the glory of her Motherhood in the wonder of the Incarnation and her place in the Communion of Saints.

I conclude that anthropology, as well as feminisms, and Mary undoubtedly comprise a very urgent topic for our time, and one might suggest that the less attractive we may find it, the greater may be our actual personal need to investigate it.

#### **Spirituality**

There is a growing literature on the theme of Mary and spirituality,<sup>90</sup> but we need to be alert to several approaches and

<sup>90</sup> See Stefano De Fiores' heavily footnoted *Maria nella vita secondo lo Spirito* (Casale Monferrato: Edizioni Piemme, 1998) and the useful bibliography attached to Jesús Castellano Cervera's "La espiritualidad mariana. Una perspectiva actual," in *In Communion with Mary: Our Heritage and Prospects for the Future: Proceedings of the Carmelite Mariological Seminar Held to Celebrate the 750th Anniversary of the Brown Scapular*, ed. Edmondo Coccia (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2003), 75-108, esp. 105-108.

aspects of the theme. “Spirituality” is a word that has become quite chameleon: it takes on a different hue when used about various schools or movements identified by a period, place, or institution (e.g., desert, medieval, Dominican, French spiritualities). It is applied to the appropriate response of various states of life (e.g., single, married, clerical, religious spiritualities); it can mean a focus on some aspect of revelation or of the Church’s life, or it can draw attention to the life of some of its members (e.g., Eucharistic, liturgical, liberation, feminist spiritualities). There is also what one might term “secular” and New Age usages: many people will claim that they are not religious but they do have spirituality.

We need to distinguish Marian devotion and Marian spirituality. More than thirty years ago Wolfgang Beinert warned that the crucial issue is to go to the gospel so as to go to Christ and through him to the Father:

Marian devotion only has pastoral and existential worth when it reflects this end and is capable of achieving it. We can thus pose the problem of Marian spirituality in this way, which may not please everybody. The formula is this: Marian piety (*Frömmigkeit*) is not identical with devotion to the Virgin (*Marienverehrung*); renewal of the latter will not automatically renew the former. Marian piety does not in the first place consist of pilgrimages, images, litanies, Marian hymns . . . The essence of Marian spirituality is truly found not in the fact that a person prays *to* Mary, but rather that a person prays *like* Mary . . . Mary is never the goal but only the model of Christian existence; in that she cannot be replaced.<sup>91</sup>

We would need to look at some modern writers to clarify for ourselves the concept of spirituality and thus be in a position to see what a Marian spirituality might involve. Sandra Schneiders, who is a strong proponent of spirituality as an academic discipline with its own identity,<sup>92</sup> notes:

<sup>91</sup> Wolfgang Beinert, ed., *Maria heute ehren: Eine theologische-pastorale Handreichung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 13-15.

<sup>92</sup> See Sandra Schneiders, “The Study of Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” *Studies in Spirituality* 8 (1998): 38-57. See also note 93 on page 34.



Spirituality as a lived experience can be defined as conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence towards the ultimate value one perceives . . . When the horizon of ultimate value is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ and communicated through the Holy Spirit, and the project of self-transcendence is the living of the paschal mystery within the context of the Christian community, the spirituality is specifically Christian and involves the person with God, others and all reality according to the understanding of these realities that is characteristic of Christian faith.”<sup>93</sup>

It follows that Mariology is a constitutive feature of spirituality, not because it is spirituality, but precisely because it is Christian.

Recently Tina Beattie in a short, compressed dictionary article deals explicitly with Marian spirituality:

Marian spirituality can only be understood as authentically Christian when it is an integral part of the life of faith. It invites the believer to deepen his or her relationship to Christ, to become incorporated into the community of the Church, and to seek a harmonious balance between the active and contemplative dimensions of a faith expressed in prayer and social action.<sup>94</sup>

She notes the difference between East and West:

Marian spirituality developed along different lines in the Eastern and Western Churches. While the Orthodox Church still draws on the early tradition to represent Mary as an iconic maternal figure who communicates awe and compassion, humility and glory, Western spirituality has reflected cultural and historical influences, so that devotion Mary bears the marks of evolving and sometimes contested beliefs and practices.<sup>95</sup>

The difference between East and West has an even more significant difference. The East does not evidence the split

<sup>93</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, “Christian Spirituality: Definition, Methods and Types,” in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM, 2005), 1-7, at 1.

<sup>94</sup> Beattie, “Mary and Spirituality,” 424-426, at 424.

<sup>95</sup> Beattie, “Mary and Spirituality,” 425.

between theology and spirituality so frequently deplored by Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

In general one can say that Eastern theology is characterised by a close union of spirituality and dogma, so that spirituality is the vision from within the dogma, whilst dogma is the normative expression of spirituality: dogma without spirituality would be ideology and spirituality without dogma would be pietism.<sup>96</sup>

The recent ARCIC statement concurs:

In the late Middle Ages scholastic theology grew increasingly apart from spirituality. Less and less rooted in scriptural exegesis, theologians relied on logical probability to establish their positions, and Nominalists speculated on what could be done by the absolute power and will of God. Spirituality, no longer in creative tension with theology, emphasized affectivity and personal experience. In popular religion, Mary came widely to be viewed as an intermediary between God and humanity, and even a worker of miracles with powers that verged on the divine. This popular piety in due course influenced the theological opinions of those who had grown up with it, and who subsequently elaborated a theological rationale for the florid Marian piety of the Late Middle Ages.<sup>97</sup>

We can now look more closely at Marian spirituality beginning with contemporary liturgy. In the 1986 collection of votive Masses in honour of Our Lady, there is a valuable General Introduction, which draws on *Marialis cultus* and liturgical texts to speak of the union of the worshipper with Mary.<sup>98</sup> One of the Masses, “Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit,” is based on the Carmelite feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.<sup>99</sup> Here there are two main ideas: Mary is

<sup>96</sup> Edward G. Farrugia, “Spirito Santo e teologia orientale,” in *Dizionario enciclopedia dell’Oriente cristiano* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2000), 722.

<sup>97</sup> ARCIC, *Mary: Grace and Hope*, 40–41, no. 43.

<sup>98</sup> *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. 2 vols: *Sacramentary* and *Lectiary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), General Introduction, 1:16, no. 13.

<sup>99</sup> *Collection of Masses of the BVM*, no. 32, “Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit”: vol. 1, Mass text, pp. 249–251; Preface, p. 148; vol. 2, Readings—Prov. 8:17–21, 34–35 or Isa. 56:1, 6–7, with Ps. 15 and gospel of Matt. 12:46–50 or John 19:25–27, or from General Appendix III, 19—Mark 3:31–35.

model for Christian holiness and she is Mother who draws us on that way.

Seeing Mary in this way shows the importance of a significant, but often-overlooked, essay written in 1960 by Hans Urs von Balthasar, where he argued that Marian spirituality underlies all others:

A spirituality centred on the attitude exemplified by Mary, is . . . not just one spirituality among others. For this reason, although Mary is an individual believer and, as such, the prototype and model of all response in faith, she resolves all particular spiritualities into the one spirituality of the bride of Christ, the Church. What we learn from Mary, a lesson valid for all times, is that the response of the handmaid of the Lord to the Word working in her all his will—in such a special and unique manner—is not just one particular theme in theology. What is special in Mary's spirituality is the radical renunciation of any special spirituality other than the overshadowing of the Most High and the indwelling of the divine Word . . . The idea of making marial [Marian] spirituality one among others is, therefore, a distortion . . .<sup>100</sup>

Here Balthasar is doing not much more than anticipating a statement of Vatican II in its Constitution on the Liturgy:

In celebrating (the) annual cycle of the mysteries of Christ, Holy Church honours the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, with a special love. She is inseparably linked with her Son's saving work. In her the Church admires and exalts the most excellent fruit of redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image that which she herself desires and hopes wholly to be. (SC,103)

The paradigm of all response to God is thus a Marian one. Balthasar is asserting that any authentic spirituality will therefore be Marian, even if this is not explicated. If we look at what would commonly be called particular spiritualities, we see that though each has a focus, the whole of any spirituality is really an articulation of Mary's total "yes," patterned on her

<sup>100</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Spirituality," in *Word and Redemption*, Essays in Theology 2 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 97-98 [= *Verbum Caro*. Skizzen zur Theologie 1/2 (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1960)].

expression in life of the Trinitarian and practical implications of this foundational response to God's Word. These indications in contemporary thought suggest that authentic spirituality must be Marian.

Marian spirituality will always reflect a particular time and culture. Thus in the later Middle Ages . . . "Mary was no longer seen as the majestic maternal presence of the early medieval Church, but as a tender and compassionate mother. In the era following the Black Death, images such as the *mater dolorosa* and the *pietà* suggest an association between the suffering of the people and the suffering of the mother of the crucified Christ."<sup>101</sup>

We need to make a distinction between the spirituality of Mary and Marian spirituality. With Jesús Castellano Cervera, we can speak of a descending Mariology which illuminates her predestination and mission and an ascending Mariology as she moves towards the consummation of God's plan for her.<sup>102</sup> We examine both the spirituality of Mary and Marian spirituality with the modern lenses of Scripture, theology, ecclesiology, liturgy, and anthropology, taking account of new directions of John Paul II (*Redemptoris Mater*), directing us towards the evangelical figure of Mary, her presence in the Church, and her maternal mediation.<sup>103</sup>

When we look at the spirituality of Mary we see the great themes of election and grace, freedom and response; she is the woman of faith and servant of the Lord; she embarks on a journey that involves light and darkness; she is the contemplative united to the Spirit and to her Son; she is one of the *anawîm* in solidarity with all peoples; she is indeed *La mujer por los damas*, a woman for others, in the felicitous phrase of Fr. Jesús.<sup>104</sup> These themes can be further developed and enriched by contemporary Trinitarian insights.

To cultivate Marian spirituality means adopting a set of values, attitudes, and activities that help us to respond to God's

<sup>101</sup> Beattie, "Mary and Spirituality," 425.

<sup>102</sup> Castellano Cervera, "La espiritualidad mariana," 75-108, at 77.

<sup>103</sup> Castellano Cervera, "La espiritualidad mariana," 85.

<sup>104</sup> Castellano Cervera, "La espiritualidad mariana," 95.



plan for us and to insert us into the relationship with Mary that Christ wants for us.<sup>105</sup> The concretization of the elements for such spirituality will again reflect times and cultures. It will demand contemplation of her, as well as communion and identification. It will involve taking up the characteristics of her life. In the language of Fr. Jesús, it should give rise to an epiphany of Mary in the life of the Church, so that we bring forth Jesus in the Church.<sup>106</sup>

### Conclusion

We have seen the ongoing relevance of the Theotokos title in Mariology, ecumenical steps of the past decades in which the theme of beauty is beginning to emerge. Since there is a growing amount of writing on Mary and the Holy Spirit by the followers of St. Maximilian Kolbe, we examined some of the more striking themes that people cite and some of the speculative theology surrounding the relationship of the Holy Spirit and Mary. It is not clear to me at this time whether such reflections belong to a main highway for Mariology or are an interesting but limited cul-de-sac. But this kind of writing runs the danger of a partial, and hence distorted, picture of Mary, one that would remove her from us. Hence the importance of contemporary anthropological approaches, even though they in turn may also be partial and in need of completion by Trinitarian considerations. Finally, we can see in spirituality a means of an expansive and experiential grasp of the mysteries, one that can lead the Church into a developed self-understanding of its life, its journey and its final destiny.

Finally, a word about devotion in the context of Vatican II. The eighth chapter of the Constitution on the Church is almost universally praised. In its concluding section it advocates proper cult of the Virgin (LG, nos. 66-67). It summarizes the appropriate devotion:

<sup>105</sup> Castellano Cervera, "La espiritualidad mariana," 79.

<sup>106</sup> A theme developed by Bl. Titus Brandsma (d. 1942) in various places, in *Carmelite Mysticism: Historical Sketches*, Fiftieth Anniversary Ed. (Darien. IL: Carmelite Press, 1986), e.g., 33-34, 59.

Let the faithful remember moreover that true devotion consists neither in sterile and transitory affection, nor in a certain vain credulity, but proceeds from true faith, by which we are to recognise the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love towards our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.<sup>107</sup>

The warnings are appropriate. But it would seem that in the post-Vatican II Church there is more emphasis on truths concerning the Virgin, especially ones that might be defined, and on imitation. There is less said about filial piety and relationship with her. In pastoral situations, sermons tend rather to focus perhaps too exclusively on the Woman of Faith and imitation of her. Looking at the “excellence of the Mother of God,” theologians, artists and poets can lay a firm foundation for pastoral attention to the Theotokos.

<sup>107</sup> LG, no. 67.